Willamette National Forest Pilot Road Analysis

Appendix J

Social Issues Process Paper

August 2001

Background and Recommendations

As a former Chief of the Forest Service noted "…just as surely as a river will find its flood plain, social values will prevail…" (Dombeck, 1999). However, while the natural and heritage resources managed by the Agency are well studied and inventoried, the social component of public land management is far less well understood.

According to Preister and Kent (1997), the extent to which federal land managers continue to drive decisions based solely on a physical ecosystem perspective, conflicts of federal land use will continue. Recognizing the social landscape, or ecosystem, as an equal partner to the physical resource base is crucial to understanding, mitigating and alleviating the issues that more and more often derail our decision-making and subsequent efforts to manage federal lands in accordance with science-based principles.

Much material exists to address some of the following issues and key questions in a general way. Some issues require further inquiry, and it is strongly recommended that the Forest **commit to and pursue** data gathering that will lend itself to better and more complete understanding of the social landscape.

A social assessment, employing James Kent's Discovery Process™ and Human Geographic Issue Mapping™ will be initiated in fiscal year 2002, covering more than half the Willamette Province. This project will result in far more detailed information to address the following questions and to inform local analyses at the appropriate scale when decisions are ripe. The project will also develop GIS layers mapping cultural descriptors and social concerns and issues addressing public land management.

Process Description and Documentation

Passive-Use or Existence Value

Background: Passive-use or existence value is based on benefits people derive from the "existence of a specific place, condition, or thing, independent of any intention, hope or expectation of active use." (USDA, 1999). Simply knowing that a certain kind of environment (such as wilderness), ecosystem (such as old growth), or resource (such as wildlife), exists constitutes passive-use value. Passive uses can include thinking, hearing or reading about a resource or place and feeling good that it exists or is being preserved.

There is also a "bequest value" component to passive-use that needs to be considered. Bequest value is the "worth one places on the assurance that a resource or place will continue to exist to be enjoyed in the future by children or grandchildren (future generations), (USDA, 1997).

When affected resources are considered to be unique or rare, outstanding or unusual, passive-use value can be greater than the value produced from the same place by active recreational use or commodity production. (Fight *et. al.* 2000).

Efforts on a national scale to protect and preserve French Pete, Opal Creek, Waldo Lake, Warner Creek, Clark Creek, roadless areas, Northern spotted owl, Canada lynx and red

tree voles (among others) suggest that there is substantial cause to recognize and address passive-use values. In fact, it could be argued that, on a political level, passive-use and existence values are second only to ecological health and functioning in import with regard to public land management decisions.

Scale

When considering passive-use or existence values, history has shown that interests at the national level can play a significant part in defining the options that are available to the decision-maker. However, assessing the probability of passive-use or existence values as significant issues must be done at the local level. A forest- or province-wide social mapping exercise should help identify value and uniqueness at that scale.

Key Questions to be addressed at the Forest, District or project level

- **Do areas planned for road construction, closure, or decommissioning have unique physical or biological characteristics, such as unique natural features or threatened and endangered species? (PV 1)**
- **Do areas planned for road construction, closure, or decommissioning have unique cultural, traditional, symbolic, sacred, spiritual, or religious significance? (PV2)**
- **What, if any, groups of people (ethnic groups, subcultures, and so on) hold cultural, symbolic, spiritual, scared, traditional, or religious values for areas planned for road entry or road closure? (PV3)**
- **Will constructing, closing, or decommissioning roads substantially affect passive use value? (PV4)**

Social Issues

Background: Forest roads represent more than travel corridors for people or products to move from "here to there". Roads certainly access forest sites, settings and viewing opportunities for an extraordinarily diverse set of users. Roads also provide a means to access forest resources of both commodity and amenity value. And roads provide staging access to remote areas, wilderness, backpacking, white-water boating and kayaking. (USDA, 2001).

But roads can also contribute sediment to streams and can act as deterrents to wildlife success and survival. The proximity of roads to certain recreational activities can also be anathema. Roads have been identified as contributing to landslides and mass failures that damaged and destroyed property. Roads can provide access to heritage and sacred sites that may be subjected to vandalism, theft and destruction.

Public response to the "Proposed Rulemaking on Administration of the Forest Development Transportation System," revealed considerably disparate views regarding how roads are perceived and how they ought to be managed. Some people see roads as a means to access resources on which they are economically dependent and others a means to access resources on which they are culturally or spiritually dependent. Still others see roads as environmentally damaging and an edifice of greed. (USDA, 1998).

Understanding the social context, the “meaning” of forest roads generally and those specific roads being considered for change is essential for supportable decisions

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How might changes in road management affect people's dependence on, need for, and desire for roads and access? (SI 1&2*)*

Key Questions to be addressed at the Forest, District or project level

- **How and where does the road system connect to other public roads and provide the primary access to communities, rural residences and businesses?**

  There are 2,130 miles of primary/secondary Forest Development Roads providing key travel routes and linkages to local communities, State and County highways, private inholdings, and inter-forest connections to trailheads and recreation sites. Any changes in maintenance level for these miles should not be made without extensive public input.

  The 4,234 miles of local roads represent the primary targets for reduced maintenance standards, decommissioning or obliteration. When the long-term status of these roads is considered, at the watershed or project scale, early and extensive community engagement is recommended. This process can serve to provide additional data for the next two questions.

- **What “personal use'” activities are commonly associated with which forest development roads (e.g. firewood gathering, berry picking, Xmas tree cutting, etc)?**

  Collection of this information could be achieved through several techniques. Where permits are issued, specific sites are or could be identified. That data should constitute a GIS special forest products layer.

  Particular attention should focus on the “ghost” or unclassified roads, both mapped and those yet unmapped.

- **How and where would people's sense of place (and special places) be affected?**

  According to Galliano and Loeffler (1999) sense of place “focuses on the subjective and often shared experience or attachment to the landscape emotionally or symbolically.” People who have never seen a certain place for themselves may know the place by name and associate special meaning with the place.

  A special place can be very small, (i.e., a single sitting rock that provides a great view); or very large, (i.e., a nation to which one is allied).

  Content Analysis conducted during the 1990 Forest Land and Resource Management Plan identified more than 80 specific sites that received at least one comment during the review period. (Many received more than a thousand comments.) That information can provide a baseline for mapping and development of a GIS layer to be refined and maintained over time. Particular attention should focus on the “ghost” or unclassified roads, both mapped and as yet unmapped, as potential access routes to special places.

The Discovery Process™ will provide additional material to address the above questions in a more empirical manner.

How can we communicate about road management in a manner that is experienced as open, honest and reliable? (SI 6)

Key Questions to be addressed at the Forest, District or project level.

- **What forms of communication are viewed as most effective?**

  People trust and rely on informal networks of communication. Schindler found that 32% of nearly 300 subjects surveyed considered personal conversations with FS staff the most useful to them. This was the highest percentage of any of the possible sources of information from which respondents might choose (Schindler 2000). Preister's work in the McKenzie Valley (1987) determined that "Public meetings are not worth it" and "Things work informally."

  Schindler's work also identified the following in order of priority to be the most important factors affecting the survey groups judgement about FS activities:

  1) Environmental consequences.
  2) Understanding the objectives of a proposed action.
  3) Reliability of FS technical or scientific information/Understanding how the decision was made.
  4) The opinions of people I respect.

Those four factors, combined with the effectiveness of informal networking and personal contact, can combine to create a very powerful communication strategy.

- **What media do most people feel comfortable with?**

  The medium of choice should be the informal communication network. Much information to guide future projects will come from the Discovery Process™ to be initiated in fiscal 2002.

- **What public participation efforts have been effective?**

  Formal public participation activities should always be tailored to the specifics of the project, the communities of interest, and the socio-political climate surrounding the issues that need to be addressed. There is simply no "recipe" for effective and successful public participation.

  Members of the Public Affairs staff are available to discuss what works and what does not. Involving them in communication and interaction strategies at the earliest possible stage of project design is strongly recommended.

  For examples of innovative and successful public participation efforts, see *An Evaluation of the Delta Showcase Projects Public Participation Process: an experiment in natural resource planning* (Dinne, 1993) and *Beyond Conflict to Consensus: Exploring and Resolving the Hot Springs Situation (Chadwick 1998).*

- **What are effective ways to solicit, elicit and gather information from interested and/or affected publics?**

  Preister (1997) suggests that an effective way to understand the interests and concerns of communities is to "enter their routines," engaging with people at places that are comfortable and familiar to them. The Discovery Process™ identifies the informal social networks through which people share information, identifying major trends and issues discussed in the community, the "issue holders" and key communicators. It also maps common cultural values, revealing scales of neighborhood, community and region.

What collaborative processes have taken place that facilitated decision-making? At what scale?

Watershed Councils and Province Advisory Committees represent broad interagency and public constituencies. How effective these bodies are in serving as key communicators and conduits of information for their represented communities of interest or place is unknown by this author.

The Forest has also employed outside facilitators to support collaborative decision-making. *See McKenzie Discovery Process, Social Ecology Associates* (Contract #53-04R4-7-1630, Fall 1997) and *Exploring and Resolving the Hot Springs Situation*, Consensus Associates (April 1998).

How and where would changes in the road system, or management thereof, affect certain groups of people (ex. minorities, ethnic, cultural, racial groups, persons with disabilities, low-income groups)? (CR 1)

Key Questions to be addressed at the Forest, District or project level.

- **What are the usage patterns of potentially affected groups?**
- **What opportunities exist to improve or better facilitate use by potentially affected groups?**
- **Has the Executive Order on Environmental Justice been considered in the decision?**

For all key questions: data does not exist on a local scale. I believe that there are processes underway and resources available that could inform us to an extent, but an integrated approach needs to be taken. This is certainly a set of questions that must be addressed during *Forest Plan revision* efforts.

How would overall community (of place) economic health be affected by changes in forest development roads? (SI 7)

Background: In the early 1980's, a number of factors combined to put the economy of Oregon on a downward trend. The need to diversify the state's economy was emphasized by the changes in federal land management that have dramatically reduced timber harvests on federal lands in Oregon.

As reported by the *2001-2002 Oregon Blue Book*, Oregon's is one of the ten most diversified state economies in the nation, at least by one measure. But rural communities continue to struggle as their reliance on natural resource industries remains high. In the past decade, serious downturns in these industries have continued and worsened. Diversification of these local communities remains a challenge. (Torgerson, ed. 2001)

Key Questions to be addressed at the District or project level.

- **What is the economic composition of community?**

  This question should be addressed at the community level. Pertinent information will be derived from the Discovery Process™ to be initiated in fiscal year 2002.

- **To what extent is community dependent on extractive, commodity forest resources (timber, mining, grazing, etc)?**

  According to McGinnis (1996):

  Lane County ranked 1st in the state for timber harvest in 1988 and 2nd in 1993.

  Linn County ranked 5th in the state for timber harvest in 1988 and 6th in 1993.

  In Marion County, while the contribution of federal timber to the harvest has declined, other owner harvest has trended up since the 1970s. Marion County ranked 22nd in the state for timber harvest in 1988 and 21st in 1993.

  Benton County ranked 14th for timber harvest in 1988 and 19th in 1993.

  Douglas County ranked 2nd for timber harvest in 1988 and 1st in 1993.

Mining and grazing do not play a substantive role in the economy of counties proximate to the Willamette National Forest.

- **To what extent is community dependent on amenity forest resources (recreation, tourism, etc)?**

  Excellent sources of information include (but are not limited to): North Santiam Canyon Economic Development Corporation; Sweet Home Economic Development Group; Blue River Community Development Corporation; McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce; Convention and Visitors Association of Lane County (CVALCO); Mike Alvage, City of Oakridge; Mike Hibbard, University of Oregon, Public Policy, Planning and Management; Bruce Shindler, Oregon State University, Forest Resources; Cascade Center for Ecosystem Management.

- **What role do roads play in the changing economics of rural communities?** (SI 17)

  Forest roads provide access to a variety of leisure time activities and recreational opportunities. According to the Task Force on Growth in Oregon "More than half of the land in Oregon is in public ownership and 90% of the public lands in Oregon are held by the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management" (Growth and its Impacts in Oregon, 1999). Between 1990 and 2000, the population of Oregon grew more than 20% (Toregerson, ed. 2001), with most growth occurring in the Willamette Valley where 70 % of our population lives, and increasingly into recreation and retirement areas.

  Some of the communities most proximate to the Forest find themselves becoming bedroom communities for urban economic centers (Portland, Salem, Eugene) while others find themselves experiencing significant increases in retirement in-migration or recreation demand.

  Forest roads also provide access to non-timber harvesting of products such as mushrooms, salal, beargrass or evergreen boughs. This "micro-economy" is often a substantial source of income for non-English speaking immigrants or migrant workers, or those who find themselves displaced from the timber harvest industry.

  Recommended contact: Brad Leavitt, "Jobs In the Woods" coordinator. He would likely have other resources to recommend as well.

How might overall community (of place) satisfaction be affected by changes to the forest development road system? (SI 13)

Key Questions to be addressed at the District or project level, until Forest Plan revision allows for broader scale "well-being analysis":

- **How cohesive is the community? What lifestyles are represented in the community?**
- **How resilient is the community? How does the community respond to change?**

  Data is not available. It is anticipated that further information will be derived from the Discovery Process™ to be initiated in fiscal year 2002.

  Recommend completion of a "well-being" assessment of communities in conjunction with Forest Plan revision efforts. See *Well-being Assessment of Communities in the Klamath Region,* (Contract 43-91W8-6-7077, Forest Community Research, 1997).

What is the perceived economic dependency of a community on a roadless area versus the value of that roadless area for its intrinsic existence and/or symbolic value(s)? (SI 8)

Key Question to be addressed at the District scale:

- **What are the significant existence and/or symbolic values of the community?**
- **What is the community lifestyle?**
- **What values are being asserted from outside the community?**

The Discover Process™ to be initiated in fiscal year 2002 will address these questions in a detailed manner.

Analysis and Interpretation

The Issues and Key Questions identified for this aspect of the analysis suggest information crucial to informed decision-making. They should be used to provide guidance and direction to projects conducted at small scales but should also be adequately addressed in forest plan revision.

A careful review of *Analysis of Public Comments: Final Scoping Report (Proposed Rulemaking o Administration of the Forest Development Transportation System)* revealed five common and important themes that have resonance locally:

- Good decisions can only come from the local level with strong involvement by the public.
- The Agency is subject to too much external influence. (What that influence was perceived to be varied widely.)
- "Wilderness" areas and "roadless" areas are one and the same in the minds of many. And these are perceived to be very, very special places.
- There is substantial opposition to closing roads (for a variety of reasons), especially the "ghost" roads.
- For any given opinion or belief expressed by anyone, there will be an opinion or belief expressed that represents the exact opposite.

(Source: USDA, 1998)

My final assessment is that, by increasing our ability to identify environmental "hotspots" through the use of social assessment and issue monitoring, we can achieve well-supported forest transportation system decisions. When decisions need to be made, early and extensive engagement of communities of both place and interest will not only inform the decision making, but can be used to ferret out more information for future uses.

Passive-use values, the identification of special places, and community wellness data should be the priorities for further investigation of the human landscape. These three arenas provide the fundamental basis for incorporating the social ecosystem with the biological ecosystem.

Process Critique

- **Data:** Consistent and integrated data is often unavailable. Data sets don't always match well with the scale of the analysis (i.e., county data sets do not overlay forest boundaries.) Time limits constrained the amount of data that could be gathered and interpreted.
- **Lack of public inclusion:** While a public "involvement" process (viz. NEPA) wasn't necessary and might not have informed the analysis directly, I believe that we missed an opportunity to begin gathering some of the missing information and to bring folks along with our endeavor. The lack of including the public also leaves us vulnerable to condemnation of the project and of the product.
- **Process:** Key Questions are certainly significant questions, and the answers would provide a rich resource base for a Forest Plan revision and would inform district-level decision-making processes. However, standing back from the analysis, it seems that the most important question, at the forest level, to be asked is "Which roads are being used, for what purpose, and by whom."

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